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CAMBRIDGE, *November 22, 1904.* The Branch met at the house of Miss Batchelder, 28 Quincy Street. Dr. George N. Chase of Harvard University treated "Greek Religion in the Light of Recent Discoveries in Crete." Since 1900, under Prince George, the Greek government has made explorations possible on the same terms as in Greece itself. Crete, accordingly, has been the ground of archæological exploration, which has been fruitful of discoveries. The customs, costumes, houses, and even diet of the Mycænæan age, a period prior to the Hellenic, have been brought to light. Among Americans occupied in this manner, the speaker mentioned an expedition from the University of Pennsylvania, and Miss Boyd and Mr. Evans. Mention was made of the recently discovered palaces and palace-shrines, dating between 2000 and 1000 B. C., which show the king evidently as father of his people and legate of the gods; of doll-like images representing different cults, and exhibiting the gods in human form; of a cult of the dead shown by tombs and rings, etc.

*December 13, 1904.* The Branch met with Miss Bumstead, 12 Berkeley Street. Dr. A. W. Ryder was the speaker of the evening, his subject being "Sanskrit Fables and Epigrams." His translations elicited discussion from guests, who found in the early Hindu lore much which reminded them of European equivalents.

*Constance G. Alexander, Secretary.*

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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

### BOOKS.

THE OLD FARMER AND HIS ALMANAC. Being some observations of life and manners in New England a hundred years ago suggested by reading the earlier numbers of Mr. Robert B. Thomas's Farmer's Almanac. Together with extracts curious, instructive, and entertaining, as well as a variety of miscellaneous matter. By GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE. Boston, Mass.: William Ware & Co. 1904. Pp. xiv, 403.

It opportunely happened that in the year of publication, the distinguished writer of this volume served as President of the American Folk-Lore Society. The book, which only in a small proportion is concerned with folk-lore proper, contains an infinity of information in regard to the changes of New England life and manners illustrated in the Almanac, which from the date of its first appearance for 1793 has continued its annual issue. Thomas (1766-1846) was brought up in the North Parish of Shrewsbury, Mass.; it illustrates the frequent changes in New England local topography, that the district he lived in was successively transferred to four different towns. He began life as a schoolmaster, and set up in his native place as a bookbinder, obtaining work from publishers in Boston, whither he migrated in 1792; having already the ambition to prepare an almanac of his own, he entered a mathematical school taught by Osgood Carleton, himself the author of an almanac. At this point may be noted

one of the amusing anecdotes abundantly furnished by Professor Kittredge. Carleton spoke English so correctly as to make his birthplace the subject of wagers, and subject him to some inconvenience ; he thought it worth while publicly to explain in print that he was born at Nottingham-west in the State of New Hampshire, and had lived in that locality for sixteen years ; but in the course of subsequent travel, "being (while young) mostly conversant with the English, he lost some of the country dialect." The astronomical studies of Thomas resulted in the publication of his almanac, "calculated on a new and improved plan, for the year of Our Lord 1793 ; being the first after Leap Year, and seventeenth of the Independence of America. Fitted to the town of Boston, but will serve for any of the adjoining states." The one hundred and thirteen issues of this publication, as Professor Kittredge observes, almost exactly cover the period of United States history under the Constitution, so that the change and development of a century may be followed in its pages ; to extract such notices, compare them, and comment on them, is the task which he has undertaken. As a result, the contents of his book are very varied ; whatever may be the field in which the reader is interested, he will be sure to find something that bears on his own particular theme, whether manners or beliefs, teaching or law, food and festivals, jests and witticisms, travel and agriculture.

The artistic embellishment of the Almanac shows the permanence of tradition. In 1800, cuts were introduced to illustrate verses which had previously been made to stand at the head of each month ; these at first represented scenes and occupations suited to the month in question. In 1804 were substituted illustrations depending on the zodiacal signs, which, however, were realistically treated, as figures having an environment of landscape. Both these methods of designation, whether by the animal signs or by the labors of the year, have an ancient and curious history, going back to southern Europe and to Roman times ; on this subject Professor Kittredge briefly touches, with reproduction of certain designs.

Some of the chapters are directly connected with folk-lore. Under the heading "Murder will out," Professor Kittredge shows that the ancient ordeal by touch, in which an accused person is made to come in contact with the corpse, under the belief that contact with the murderer would cause a flow of blood from the wound, was in force and apparently legalized in New England as late as 1769. In that year, Mrs. Jonathan Ames of Boxford died suddenly, and suspicion was directed against her mother-in-law and the son of the latter ; these were invited to touch the body, but refused ; they were committed, but in the end acquitted for want of evidence. In 1646, a mother was forced to touch the face of the dead child she was suspected of having destroyed ; the blood came freshly into the face, and she confessed ; no doubt to produce such avowal on the part of the guilty had been one effect of the superstition.

An ancient folk-anecdote recites the warfare of the toad and the spider ; a narration of this sort is given in the Almanac of 1798. We are told how the toad, after being bitten by its antagonist, sought out and devoured

a piece of a plantain; a spectator, out of curiosity, pulled up the plant; the toad, once more wounded, vainly sought for its remedy, and immediately expired. This duel had been already put into verse by Richard Lovelace, whose poetry was printed in 1659. Sir Thomas Browne also knew the history. In this connection, Professor Kittredge cites from Winthrop a tale concerning a combat between a mouse and a snake. Mr. Wilson, pastor of Boston, gave it as his opinion that the struggle was significant: the snake represented the devil, and the mouse the Puritan immigrants, an humble folk, but destined to deprive the Evil One of his kingdom. That American Indians, like other pagans, were worshippers of the Devil was a common tenet of New England divines, in which they did but reflect the usual attitude of the Church, which some missionaries retain even to the present day. It is odd to encounter among unimaginative Puritans the mystical tendency of the Middle Ages, in which actual and external events might be interpreted as only symbols of spiritual forces.

As to the treatment of witches, New Englanders only shared the universal belief and practice. This is better understood than of old, although ignorant persons continue to make the executions of Salem a reproach against Massachusetts. As Professor Kittredge remarks, the wonder is, not that such an outbreak should have taken place, but that it should so suddenly have come to an end; the real fact being that, as compared with the mother country, or any European land, the colonists exhibited a remarkable moderation and good sense, for which they deserve credit.

The maker of the "Farmer's Almanac" was not a superstitious person. The custom of almanac-makers required him to insert something regarding lunar influences, as related to the labors of the house and the farm; but this he does perfunctorily, with a suspicion of irony; and in course of time the whole matter came to be passed over in the pages of his work. Thus we read in 1800:—

August 19. *Mow bushes, mow bushes now!* If you have any faith in the influence of the moon on them.

In 1803, we find him saying:—

January 18. Old Experience says (and she generally speaks the truth) that pork, killed about this time, will generally come out of the pot as large as when it was put in.

However, in such attitude Thomas was in advance of his day. At the close of the eighteenth century, even scientific farmers, who thought they had the attestation of experiment, considered that the state of the moon ought to receive attention. In 1790, Dr. Deane, author of an octavo volume called "The New England Farmer," a work of real merit, having put the matter to a practical test, decided that it was most effectual to cut bushes during the old moon, when the "sign is in the heart." He considered that even though zodiacal signs may be a mere convention, yet these might be of service in pointing out the proper time for the undertaking. Professor Kittredge remarks that the attitude of these sober experi-

menters is not to be confused with the superstitious theories of earlier centuries.

In regard to astrology, he shows how important a part this had in the daily life of the eighteenth century, more especially in navigation. It was still the usual practice to employ an astrologer, who should cast a horoscope, in order to determine the exact day and hour on which a vessel ought to weigh anchor. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a publication which received the title of the Book of Knowledge circulated freely among New England people; this included popular astrology, prognostications, palmistry, etc. Indeed, as is observed, almanacs existed largely for the purpose of designating the days and hours when the particular influence of one or another planet would be operative.

Only the title need be mentioned of a chapter on "Indian Talk," in which is discussed the character of the English familiarly spoken by Indians in New England. In dealing with this question, as all other topics, Professor Kittredge has employed abundant learning, with the result of producing an exceedingly entertaining book.

W. W. N.

**GEOGRAPHISCHE NAMENKUNDE.** Methodische Anwendung der namenkundlichen Grundsätze auf das allgemeine zugängliche topographische Namenmaterial. Von J. W. NAGL. Leipzig und Wien: Franz Deuticke, 1903. Pp. vii, 122.

The three sections of this monograph treat: Geographic names of peoples remote from us (Germans), those not related culturally (Chinese, Japanese, American Indians, Turks, East Aryans), and those culturally so related (Hebrews, Phœnicians and Punic peoples, Semites in Spain, Magyars, etc.), geographic names of peoples racially and culturally related to the Germans (Portuguese and Spaniards, Italians, British and Irish, peoples of Balkan peninsula, Russians, Austro-Hungarian Slavs), geographic names of Germans and Scandinavians. A brief bibliography and an alphabetical list of all geographical names discussed are appended. The only aboriginal American names considered are: Mexico, Popocatepetl, Tehuantepec, Zacatecas, Chicago, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Chimborazo, Chiquisaca, Chocachacra, Andes, Hayti, for which more or less exact etymologies are given. Our *Japan* and cognates in the modern languages of Europe go back with the older *Zipangu* to the Chinese *Ji-pên-koûe*, "Land of the Rising Sun," — so too *Nippon*, by dialectic variation. The names of the continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa, are all probably of Semitic origin, but their exact etymologies are not at all clear. The author rightly accepts the derivation of *America* from *Amerigo*, probably = Gothic *Amalrich*. As a place-name *Bismarck* (p. 78) signifies "a mark on the Biese (a little river)." Of words which, in English, have achieved more than a lodging as place-names or ethnic terms, the following are discussed by Nagl: Alp, Arras, Atlas, Brussels, Cologne, Croat, Nanking, Slav, etc. On the whole, this little volume seems to be much above the average in accuracy, and contains a good deal of valuable matter. The sections (pages 68-91) on